

Mount Auburn Cemetery



**Baltimore City Commission for Historical and
Architectural Preservation- Staff Report
December 8, 2009**

Landmark: Mount Auburn Cemetery (Ordinance 0851 12/12/86), located at 2630 Waterview Avenue. Approximately 33 acres.

Request: Authorization of the Department of Transportation to proceed with perimeter improvements

Owner: Sharp Street United Methodist, Owner of Cemetery
City of Baltimore, Owner of perimeter

Project Sponsor: Department of Transportation

Rev. Dellyne Hinton, Pastor, Sharp Street Methodist Church

Eric Holcomb, Staff Presenter.



Description Summary:

On July 10, 2007, CHAP reviewed the Department of Transportation perimeter improvements to Mount Auburn Cemetery. Commissioner Kraft moved and former commissioner Philip Merrill seconded a motion **“to approve the proposal in concept, reserving final approval contingent upon submittal of 1) A Master Plan to address the design and future operations of the cemetery and 2) a development plan to address the specific requirements to improve the cemetery conditions** (Please see attached staff report).”

Prior to this CHAP hearing, the cemetery officials were in negotiations with Morgan State University, concerning the future plans of Mount Auburn Cemetery.

On April 16, 2008, The Baltimore Heritage Area, who provided grant funding to Mount Auburn Cemetery, and CHAP staff outlined the components that would fulfill both the Baltimore Heritage Area grant requirements and CHAP’s 7/10/2007 motion.

On November 4, 2009, planning staff Eric Holcomb and Brent Flickinger met with cemetery and Morgan State University officials to review their plans for Mount Auburn Cemetery. At this meeting all components of the master plan were discussed and CHAP staff recommended obtaining final approval at the December hearing.

On November 13, 2009, City agencies involved with Mount Auburn Cemetery met to review the City’s involvement, including CHAP, with the Cemetery. At this meeting, attending agencies agreed to support CHAP’s authorization of the Department of Transportation perimeter improvements.

Mount Auburn Cemetery officials have submitted the master plan, development plan, and existing conditions report.

On May 10, 2008, Sharp Street Memorial United Methodist Church finished a *Site Analysis Report*. This report (see attached) was also accompanied with several detailed mapping of broken monuments, subsidence graves, sinking monuments, etc. This document laid out the history, goals and aspirations, physical conditions of the cemetery, neighborhood characteristics, strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, threats, and an outline action plan.

A Master Plan was created. Please see attached images.

In June of 2009, the Mount Auburn Cemetery developed a draft comprehensive business plan, which laid out the creation of a Steering Committee and an outline for a funding raising campaign and business plan. Please see attached.

Staff Analysis:

The decline of Mount Auburn cemetery occurred over decades for many reasons. Foremost, plots were originally sold with no perpetual care by the Church, the Cemetery Board of their groundskeepers. That means responsibility for up-keep for each plot belongs to the plot deed holders. Many of these plots have no surviving family members, or members that are able or willing to assume maintenance. Over the years, former cemetery officials have not been able to address these issues and stave off deterioration. The current cemetery board in partnership with Morgan State University and others have begun to address these issues as evident from these documents. In short, the current cemetery board has inherited this responsibility and has diligently worked towards complete restoration of the cemetery.

The Mount Auburn officials in partnership with Morgan State University have submitted all the documents requested by the Commission. They have provided a detailed master plan that will guide the restoration of the cemetery. They have submitted a *Site Analysis Report* which details the existing conditions of the cemetery and begins to outline solutions. With the consultation of W. S. Tegeler Monument Company, the team generally identified the restoration issues with the grave subsidence, and sinking and broken monument and headstones. In addition, the records of the cemetery are being digitized and preserved to archival standards.

The cemetery officials followed up with the *Mt. Auburn Cemetery: Comprehensive Business Plan*. This document outlines the mission, vision, objectives and a business structure to achieve their vision. In addition, the document identifies representatives for the advisory board. It also outlines the development of a columbarium, perpetual care, proposed facility, and the restoration of the monuments and headstones.

Not only has Sharp Street United Methodist Church begun their planning efforts, they have also made great strides in maintaining the cemetery. For more than a year, Sharp Street United Methodist Church has partnered with the Maryland Department of Corrections which has removed much of the invasive, overgrown vegetation. The church has also worked with the Maryland Department of the Environment to safely remove much of the invasive trees in the cemetery. Today, the improvements are extremely noticeable.

Staff Recommendation: Authorize the Department of Transportation to proceed with perimeter improvements. The Mount Auburn Cemetery Officials have submitted a master plan, a site conditions analysis, and a comprehensive business plan that fulfills the July 10, 2007 CHAP motion.